

Shepherd Careers Forum '07: Final Report

Rice University hosted a groundbreaking forum on careers in music performance: **Convening Student Perspectives and Creating New Models for the 21st Century** on the weekend of October 12-14, 2007*. The purpose of the forum was to explore how using a national student leadership forum could encourage acceptance of new career models within our educational system and within their community.

The forum represented the first collective action taken by a select number of premier music education institutions to bring national attention to the need for new ideas on how young musicians can be prepared and encouraged to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The outcomes revolved around three intersecting areas, all components of “a life in music”: Life Skills, Creative Performance/Engagement and Business Skills. In working toward that end, discussions at the forum focused on the following:

- How young non-traditional ensembles can get started in the profession
- New trends in audience engagement and presentation of live classical music
- How schools of music can work together with their communities to support young artists who embark on careers that are serving new audiences, but are outside the mainstream
- How our schools can better respond to our students’ need for business and entrepreneurial skills

Why a National Forum on Careers in Classical Music?

Our rapidly changing times are challenging the traditional models and the artists who work within the field of classical music performance. Globalization, fast-paced communication, and shifts in cultural trends all contribute to questions about the directions in which careers in classical music are headed. An innovative forum for students from sixteen of the nation’s top schools of music provided the opportunity to explore and embrace new ideas regarding the field of music performance.

Within this cultural milieu, new research tells us that student perceptions about music careers are significantly influenced by their interaction with their peer groups. Music students still view traditional careers in orchestras, chamber music and solo playing as the primary models for success in the profession. “Other” performance models such as teaching artists, composite careers, and alternative career paths may be overlooked simply because they are unfamiliar, don't have a high public profile, or carry the same cachet. This may limit the thinking of many talented young musicians in finding their own best career path, as well as limit the dissemination of the art form in today's society.

Rice University professor Benjamin Kamins : “When students have a narrow view of the profession, they limit themselves in finding their own best career path. There is a misconception among music students that you get a job in an orchestra and you live happily ever after. It’s incredible to get and keep that job, but it doesn’t guarantee artistic satisfaction.”

“It seemed natural to have very gifted young performers come together to draw positive, creative energy from each other to formulate possible new directions for our profession. New research tells us that student perceptions about music careers are significantly influenced by their interaction with their peer groups.”

* Funding for the career forum was generously provided by Rice University in conjunction with The Shepherd School of Music

Overview of the Forum: Participants and Plan of Action

- 43 student leaders and 20 faculty/staff from sixteen of our nation’s top schools of music participated in the forum. Schools included the Cleveland Institute of Music, Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Colburn Conservatory of Music, Curtis Institute of Music, Eastman School of Music,

Juilliard School, Lamont School of Music, Manhattan School of Music, New England Conservatory, North Carolina School of the Arts, Northwestern University, Oberlin Conservatory of Music, Peabody Institute, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Shepherd School of Music, and the USC Thornton School of Music. Student leaders who were gifted performers and accomplished students with decidedly interesting ideas for their careers were chosen to participate.

- Eric Booth, nationally recognized arts consultant and faculty member at The Juilliard School, served as moderator for this student-centered forum.
- Professor Shoshana Dobrow, (Ph.D., Harvard Business School) presented key findings from her research on the social factors that influence students when making career-related decisions.
- *eighth blackbird*, a six member chamber ensemble and *The Chiara String Quartet*, two young groups who are nationally renowned for their adventurous programming, commitment to community outreach, and innovative presentation skills, gave showcase performances for the participants. They additionally participated in workshops and breakout groups, to discuss how they have met the challenges of working in the shifting arts landscape.
- Mini “lab” performances by the student participants on the last day exemplified the creative thinking that emerged during the forum.
- Rather than leading discussions, the faculty/staff only observed and responded when appropriate. Discussions involving the faculty/staff often focused on how to best encourage and support students and alumni who decide to pursue these new careers.
- Faculty/ staff attendees represented a cross section of educational roles within institutions, and included school administrators, studio teachers, career skills teachers and directors of outreach programs.
- A document summarizing the recommendations and ideas for implementing them was developed.

My hope is that this event will encourage more young musicians to discover what they are truly passionate about, and inspire them to take the necessary risks to bring their unique talents to the world. The idea of a student-centered forum was intriguing to me. Due to the easy access of information these days, our students are quite well informed about new trends in the profession. It seemed that it was time to bring students from all over the U.S. together to inform us about their dreams for a life in music. Using well-respected, slightly older musicians of their generation to tell their stories of life in the profession would be both inspiring and encouraging. ---Janet Rarick

Prior to the Forum:

The *Chiara String Quartet* and *eighth blackbird* embarked on “high risk” careers; their unique approach to programming and presentation of classical music falls outside of traditional and conventional pathways. Although these ensembles are now well established, they are only a few years older than most of the student participants hence they fall into nearly the same peer group. Would close interaction with these ensembles broaden the students’ ideas about what is possible in a classical music career?

Would students from schools where traditional career paths are intensely pursued show interest in non-traditional career paths? Would they, in turn, embrace a somewhat improvised performance situation (the public “lab” performances at the end of the forum) that involved some risk? Each student, having brought a prepared solo work, was charged with presenting a cohesive 20-minute program in collaboration with 6 other students (randomly chosen) in less than 24 hours. Other areas of consideration were:

- How does this generation of students view success in our field? Is that view in sync with what our current arts environment can support?
- How important/appropriate are classes in business skills at the college/conservatory level? What is the most effective way to teach these skills?

- Faculty and staff from participating schools were asked to consider the following questions during the forum, as they observed the students' response to the weekend: ***“What are the key skills we are seeing students exercise and how can we imagine ways to develop these skills within the broader population of musicians? What resources might we tap within training programs, with partnerships with other organizations, and societal opportunities to expand these capacities? We invite you to imagine beyond conservatory scheduling limitations to consider imaginative and ambitious ways to change the status quo—making it widely part of the artist's world.”*** (Eric Booth)

Activities at the Forum: Performances, Interactive Workshops and Discussion Groups

Friday, October 12, 2007

The *Chiara String Quartet* began the weekend with a performance designed to showcase their programming for a club setting. They played recorded “groove music” as the audience came into the recital hall, and blue wash lighting gave a “club feel” to the 30-minute program that included standard quartet repertoire and commissioned works.

Chiara String Quartet Program:

Jefferson Friedman

WA Mozart

Jefferson Friedman

Johannes Brahms

Gabriella Frank

Introduction to String Quartet No. 3 (2005)

Dissonance Quartet (First Movement)

First Movement from String Quartet No. 2 (1999)

Quartet in A minor (Slow Movement)

Levendás: An Andean Walkabout (2001)

(Movement 6: Coqueteos)

Post-performance Interactive Workshop: *Chiara String Quartet* with Student Participants

Discussion at this workshop addressed the following issues:

- How creating a group mission statement became a key element in the *Chiara's* success as an ensemble
- The positive effect of letting go of specific goals such as competitions and booking prestigious engagements
- Deciding and honoring what programs an ensemble will and won't do is a vital element in their process
- Recognizing the need to reinvest earnings the group is important
- Business skills are important, but when is the best time to teach/learn them?
- Should career skills classes be required?

A “Very Open Rehearsal” with The *Chiara String Quartet* and Eric Booth, Moderator

Saturday, October 13, 2007

This session, with the *Chiara* rehearsing a section of Jefferson Friedman's quartet, focused attention on the interpersonal skills of the *Chiara*. The moderator (Eric Booth) encouraged students to ask questions about the *Chiara's* rehearsal process.

Rice graduate student Pamela Harris:

“They work together well—great interpersonal skills. If something is said that could be irritating, they brush past it. They use humor to defuse situations. (It is) inspiring that they try to work as a group, but maintaining creativity and individuality.”

Four Small-Group Breakout Sessions with Student Participants and The Chiara String Quartet

These sessions followed the “Very Open Rehearsal”.

The student reports summarized the small group discussions, offered here in their own words:

In the area of Life Skills

- Students asked how the Chiara was formed: the quartet members had shared or similar backgrounds
- “What is the ideal (career)? Most schools focus on orchestra (but maybe I don’t want to do it)”
- Conservatory attitude: can be discouraging for students “not destined” for “successful jobs”—the advice is don’t drop out, but expand your definition of success
- Ideal of achieving artistic success and successful engagement of audiences
- “A non-material goal—it is good when the material goal doesn’t come through. A material goal is all you will get if that is all you look for”
- Use your skills to go for what you want; communication with peers, schools (should) offer alternative career paths
- What is it that we want or need? Go for that—a deeper sense
- *Flexible purposing-John Dewey** (*pouring yourself into a goal and new goals emerge*) (Eric Booth)
- Risk-taking—incorporate that mentality into curriculum
- Fine line between education and exposure

In the area of Creative Performance/Engagement

- “Looking at what we want to do and how to get there-whatever we decide to do, we must do it well, what do you enjoy and how to get it to your audience”—*idiosyncratic excellence* (Eric Booth)
- Common theme: philosophical role of an artist and the responsibility to bring it all together
- Try to determine our roles as artist or audience—what are the needs of both? Just showing stuff doesn’t make an impact
- Meeting the needs of different cultures; various needs of historical context—i.e. U.S.-- lack of arts education; Australia-- lots of exposure and no interest
- Presentation issues: aesthetic and informational presentation (head vs. heart)
- Feel out audience’s expectations and needs and be flexible within that
- Establish your own goals within the performance
- Types of audiences we present to, future dreams include contemporary jazz
- Deciding about types of repertoire? Working with composers, talking to people

In the area of Business Skills

- Business classes—who should teach them?
- Composers: getting connected with them and pay them, too
- “When should you get an agent? Do it yourself first, so you know the business.”
- Making financial decisions—corporation or partnership?” How do we learn? Does it imply a deficiency (in our musical abilities)?”

SUMMARY

Summarizing the Student/Chiara discussions:

Music must be performed at the highest level with total commitment from the stage

What is success in our field?

The value of taking risks

How to think about goal setting and the importance of respecting the value of process

The artist’s relationship with the audience: the need to respect and connect with audiences

Answered questions about how the group was formed, when to look for management, how to make financial decisions

Questions about the need for business classes

Exposing students to alternative career paths

* John Dewey (1859-1952): American philosopher, psychologist and educational reformer

A faculty and staff session with Eric Booth ran concurrently with the student/*Chiara* breakout session. Topics discussed were related to the students' comments after the *Chiara*'s performance and workshops:

SUMMARY

Summarizing the faculty and staff discussion session:

- *The Teachable Moment—when the students are receptive to learning (“just in time learning”)*
- *Use of interactive events—drawing their own answers from other students*
- *Lead by example: students view how their faculty work as a model for life skills*
- *When and how are the best times to introduce life skills?*
- *Many life skills are learned in chamber music*
- *The need to give up ownership of classes / involve students in the substance of classes*
- *Stress the process*
- *Include creativity throughout the curriculum*
- *Create a sense of community*
- *Use of time saving tools/ Using internet for grunt work and sharing*
- *Provide career services after they leave school*
- *Team teaching*
- *Our ambivalence about teaching career skills*
- *Incorporation of all of the above into the curriculum*

Music Career Research Presentation by Dr. Shoshana Dobrow

Saturday Afternoon

Researcher Dr. Shoshana Dobrow presented findings from her *Longitudinal Study of Music Involvement*, an ongoing study of the effect of calling on young musicians. Beginning in 2001, this study has tracked almost 600 students from their high school years. Dr. Dobrow describes the goals of her research:

“Why do so many young musicians make the seemingly irrational decision to pursue the extraordinarily competitive, challenging professional music career path? Despite the widespread career advice communicated by music teachers to their students, “Do music if it’s the only thing you can do,” and very low job availability, the job market for musicians across genres is characterized by an extremely high supply of talented, motivated people. This study explores how musicians’ relationship with music develops throughout their lives. Specifically, the heart of this study is the attempt to understand the following dimensions of musicians’ relationship with music: sense of passion, identity, urgency, engulfs consciousness, longevity, sense of meaning, and domain-specific self-esteem. This research defines the combination of these seven elements as the degree to which a person has a calling toward music, and examines both antecedents and consequences of calling.”

It seemed pertinent for a student-centered forum to focus the elements of social interaction that influence young musicians in their career choices. In her presentation, Dr. Dobrow described how results from her survey show that a sense of calling and social interaction among peers can be a significant predictor of career outcomes.

Her study includes the following:

- Social influence: Parental involvement in the arts and calling--supportive career advice facilitates the development of a sense of calling. Enjoyment and comfort socializing with musician peers facilitates the development of a sense of calling
- Ability is not a predictor of calling
- Thus, calling is not solely an internal, personal characteristic

Dr. Dobrow describes the power of peer group/ social influence:

“My research has found that social influences, from both peer and from parents, can have a powerful effect on musicians’ sense of calling and on their career decisions. For example, participants who didn’t enjoy socializing with fellow musicians experienced a decline in their calling for music over time compared to those who enjoyed socializing with their peers more. And if participants’ parents were not supportive of their calling for music, they were less likely to intend to pursue music professionally. These findings are intriguing to me because we tend to think of calling as being something very personal and very internal—not something subject to social influence, as my research is showing.”

The study addressed other aspects of a sense of calling:

- Participants who experience a strong sense of calling for music and receive calling-oriented parental support are most likely to attend music-oriented college programs. These factors—the sense of calling and parental support—are more powerful predictors of college choice than musical ability. The most passionate students are not necessarily the most talented.
- The higher young musicians’ sense of calling is, the more likely they are to ignore discouraging career advice from their music teacher, regardless of ability.
- There is no direct relationship between sense of calling and happiness (happiness meaning well-being—how you feel about life). In general, students are happiest when their degree of calling is in sync with parental support for their musical endeavors.

Sarah Rothenberg Presentation

Music director (award winning *Da Camera Society of Houston**) and pianist Sarah Rothenberg’s presentation utilized her life/career story to motivate the student participants to creatively look at alternative career paths. She focused on two concepts: the importance of being passionate about what one does, and engaging an audience to connect to the music through non-musical (visual) elements such as art and literature. This talk resonated strongly with the students, and they incorporated many of her ideas into their performances the next day.

* winner of CMAAclaim for work in chamber music having a significant cultural effect on a local or regional community, and CMA/ASCAP award for adventurous programming

Graduate Student Pamela Harris:

“I loved hearing Sarah Rothenberg speak. She said something that I have recently come to believe myself, that classical music is approachable—and people really can enjoy it and understand it on a purely emotional, responsive level. Head knowledge can enhance enjoyment of a piece, but it is not necessary to that enjoyment.”

The rest of Saturday afternoon was spent in rehearsal (student participants) and breakout brainstorming sessions (faculty/staff participants).

***eighth blackbird*: Performance and Post-Performance Interactive Workshop**

Eighth blackbird chamber ensemble performed a 30-minute evening program. This contemporary music ensemble (flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, percussion) was formed during their college years at Oberlin.

***eighth blackbird* program:**

Dennis DeSantis

Frederic Rzewski

Thomas Albert

Eel from Powerless

Pocket Symphony (selected movements)

VIII from Thirteen Ways

Eric Booth led a second interactive post-performance workshop with *eighth blackbird* and student participants. This workshop included discussion of the following:

- How *eighth blackbird* approaches programming
- The commissioning process—benefits and challenges
- Working with composers both in long term planning and intensive rehearsal necessitated by their unique performance model
- Connecting audiences with new music
- The history of their ensemble, and how it developed during their years at Oberlin
- The division of labor and decision-making within the group
- Their unique style of presentation (playing from memory and choreographed movement on stage) and how this enhances their connection with the audience
- How they approach funding—grants, individual donors and presenters
- Marketing and promotion strategies
- How young musicians can get started in the profession with a “non-traditional” ensemble

SUMMARY

In summary, the eighth blackbird workshop centered in on interpersonal interaction in the ensemble and entrepreneurship. Key points were:

- *The importance of interpersonal skills*
- *Making artistic decisions*
- *Performance at the highest level (lots of rehearsal)*
- *Having a mission, identifying and filling a niche*
- *The importance of total commitment to the ensemble*
- *Engaging with audiences in a direct and authentic way*

Final Performances, Discussions and Outcomes

Sunday, October 14, morning sessions: Student participant groups rehearsed for their upcoming performances and faculty/staff participants developed recommendations for moving ahead, based on what they observed during the weekend.

Faculty/ Staff Session:

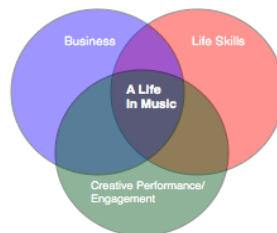
The faculty/staff group heard reports from the previous day's breakout sessions on how schools could implement ideas brought forth during the forum.

Discussion centered on several points that resonated through the weekend:

- It is important to recognize that there are a huge variety of successful careers in the profession that fall outside of the narrow traditional view of success. These may be perceived as “fall-back or failures”.
- Our schools can do a better job of preparing students for a future that is wider in scope.
- Students sometimes have a negative perception of music business classes (you won't make it in the field, so this is a fall-back strategy), or as publicly showing lack of faith in your abilities.
- If there is no direct application of business/career skills, students often forget what they have learned.
- Students are encouraged to take artistic risks, but they should also be encouraged to take risks in their career choices.
- Each school expressed the desire to help their students in ways beyond what they are now doing.
- The following recommendations **MUST** be customized to each school's existing programs. (There is no need to abandon existing programs, but instead, get a commitment from the institution to use what they already have to implement the recommendations.)
- Project-based learning was strongly encouraged, as was engaging alumni to share their professional experiences.

A conceptual framework entitled *A Life in Music*, summarized the faculty/staff recommendations based on observations of the student-driven interactive sessions:

A Life in Music



Develop Tiered Multi-faceted Programs Tailored to the Culture of Each Institution

- Mentoring
- Internships
- Awards for Entrepreneurial Projects
- Intersessions for Student-Designed Projects
- Regional Collaborations Among Institutions
- Resource Network within the Institution
- Utilizing Professional Organizations
- Supported Career Office
- Coordinated Master Class Series
- One-on-One Counseling
- Short-Term Residencies

Student “Lab” Performances

Sunday afternoon

Seven groups of students, formed by a random drawing the previous day, were challenged to utilize their experience at the forum by creating and performing an innovative 20-minute “lab” program for the public—not in the usual concert hall setting, but rather alternative venues at the Shepherd School. Each presentation was unique, the programs were organized thematically and designed to be engaging for the audience. The performances were interactive, often used lighting and non-traditional configurations of the performers to enhance the presentation.

The students chose titles that reflected the adventurous nature of their programs:

- *Dialogues in Development: Choose Your Own Adventure!*
- *PANdemonium: a twisted tale*
- *Chiarascuro: From light to darkness*
- *Conversations*
- *Cultural Conversations: A casual musical journey through time and across borders*
- *Options and Outcomes*
- *Great Expectations: A walk through Beethoven’s late String Quartets*

Students’ Final Reflections and Wrap-up Session

Students reflected on their “lab” performance experience by offering the following observations:
(in their own words)

In the area of creative performance

- The performances were all creative in very different ways
- As crazy and unplanned as some of the ideas may have been, had there been more structure or set rules, the results would not have been as exciting
- There was an ease to putting together these performances, primarily because of the interactive sessions with the *Chiara* and *eighth blackbird* ensembles
- There were great risks taken, they just put it out there to see what would happen and went with it
- It was challenging to create innovative programs while placing the music first
- The performances were riveting and engaging from beginning to end
- Music remained the focus of each performance
- A great sense of camaraderie emerged from the collaborations
- Creative use of space was employed
- Experimenting with lighting and spacial concepts and acknowledging the importance thereof

In the area of audience engagement

- The audience seemed more involved than usual and appeared to get more out of it. The audience engaged interactively, rather than sitting back and simply observing
- The performances were oriented more toward the audience. This notion permeated the whole weekend from the *Chiara*’s first talk through the lab session
- When observing *eighth blackbird* and *Chiara*, there was a strong connection among the performers, and the audience also felt a part of that. It was casual and comfortable, for both performers and audience.
- There was no compromise in the integrity of the music selected, despite the focus on making the music more engaging for the audience.
- The performance is about the quality of the music and the performance, and the audience will respond to that.
- Using space and ambiance creatively can effectively draw an audience in
- As the lab groups were not guided, the need for open communication was strongly emphasized
- The idea of creating an “experience” for the audience galvanized the performers

Forum Feedback

Eric Booth asked the students “What affected you? What did you get from the conference?”
The students responded (in their own words):

In the area of Life Skills

- They all arrived here, and became involved in what is perhaps the first time a meeting of students and faculties from conservatories across the states has taken place. The connection and the community that has been developed here is really important
- *eighth blackbird*, the Chiara and Sarah Rothenberg were great role models
- Impressed by Chiara and *eighth blackbird*'s connection among their members
- It is good not to have a specific task, and if you are given one, don't be limited by it
- The worst-case scenario is that it might not work
- Writing a personal mission statement is important
- Better to commit completely for a short time than partially for a long time; live the commitment
- “Do everything whole-heartedly” (Eric Booth)
- Surround yourself with people who are as passionate as you are
- We need to be curious all the time, with open eyes, because we're going to find things we're not looking for
- Think about what it is you're communicating out there. Sincerity of thought.
- They felt encouraged to do what they want to do. Keep doing what you're doing. Develop projects, find interesting programs, do what grabs you
- They can be ambassadors for these ideas to their schools

In the area of Creative Performance/Engagement

- Bringing an “experience” to the audience
- Even within the context of innovation, the music comes first
- High quality of the showcase ensembles' performances
- Important to focus on the audience and not ourselves (from the Chiara workshop)
- No artistic compromises were made even though the presentation was different
- Challenge of venues (performances in alternative spaces); use of visual and spatial elements (from *eighth blackbird*)
- The importance of lighting from Sarah Rothenberg's talk
- It's important to remember that the audience wants to be there and hear the music, so being inclusive is a must
- All the performances were so different, it was great to see all the options—there are so many things out there that can be done
- “*Enabling constraint*—you've got five people and 24 hours: projects can catalyze creativity. Can we create these types of projects in schools?” (Eric Booth)
- Trusting the audience. If you put something out there genuinely, the audience will respond. “I really love this piece!”

SUMMARY: THE IMPACT OF THE FORUM

Eric Booth asked, “What are the students taking away from this weekend? What is the impact and the long term resonance for you?”

Student observations (in their own words):

- The ideas promoted were liberating
- The idea of connecting students and faculty through collaboration
- The audience is there for you
- There are many possibilities for delivering an effective performance
- Importance of writing my own mission statement
- Being sincere with ourselves helps us to make decisions about careers and about our mission.
- Gives one the courage to do what you want to do / develop projects that incorporate the audience
- Surround yourself with people who are as passionate as you are

How can we move forward beyond the forum? More ideas from the students:

Start a blog run by the students, a group of advocates within the school (students)]
Studio teachers attending the forum could start a kind of discussion (town hall meeting) at their schools that includes performance models from the forum
It is necessary to expand the definition of professional success within the institution
Peer advocacy and modeling
Peer examples (don't just talk, but put it out there)
Schools should bring in young, innovative groups for students to observe
Help other musicians to find their own path
Careers resources: having them there doesn't always mean you will use them
Influence of studio teachers is strong-try to use that for change
Get peers together who like these ideas—encourage them
Audition process is outdated—include an interview
Reality check—this was a nurturing retreat environment
New projects need an expiration date

Eric Booth mentioned the example of the use of trim tabs (a very small device used for turning super tankers) can be a metaphor for how a small, yet specific element can promote significant change in the larger system.

Outcomes of the Forum:

The forum created a wonderful sense of camaraderie among all the participants and offered an opportunity for informal, yet intense reflection on the issues we face. It was suggested that all of the faculty and staff attendees would go back to their own institutions, and in conjunction with their students, make a report to the school about the forum. It was hoped that they together would determine what recommendations would be feasible to implement and in turn share those with the other participating schools.

Faculty participant Angela Beeching (NEC) succinctly summarized the topics of discussion that resonated throughout the weekend:

- *Examining how we define success in music*
- *Articulating a personal mission for individuals, ensembles and institutions*
- *Finding a sense of usefulness and purpose as a performer through connecting with audiences*
- *Imagining and creating one's own niche*
- *Thinking of career development as project-based*

Beyond the Forum: Actions Taken by Participants and their Respective Schools

- Many of the student and faculty/staff participants reported on the forum in meetings with their respective school administrators.
- At Northwestern University, forum participants Dorothy Wyandt (faculty at Northwestern), Paul Forek, Brett Johnson, Colin Oldberg, Laura Weiner, (students who attended the forum) held an interactive performance event at their school. This program was student led and incorporated many of the programming and presentation ideas from the forum.
- The Curtis Institute of Music hosted an in-house career forum, *Creative Convergence*, on April 12, 2008. Organized by Shepherd Careers Forum participants Mary Kinder Loiselle (Curtis faculty) and Curtis students Teddy Abrams, Patti Francheschy and Stanford Thompson, the one-day event featured sessions with the ensemble *Time for Three* (Curtis alumni). The event featured sessions on developing improvisation skills, designing and launching your career, and included performances by participating students.
- The Shepherd School of Music launched a new initiative, The Sviatoslav Richter Fund for Outreach, that provides financial support for selected entrepreneurial outreach projects in the Houston community. Four student projects were funded in the spring of 2008.
- Dr. Dobrow has included new questions in her research study survey. These look at the effect of outreach activities on a “calling”*. She writes, “In my view, the most significant way in which the forum was a catalyst for my thinking about the relationship between calling and outreach was through my observations of the forum participants’ activities at the forum itself as well as my conversations with several of the participants about the outreach activities that they participate in on a regular basis. At the forum, the participants pulled off amazing, polished performances in a very limited amount of time. Seeing the huge amount of creativity and energy generated by these talented young musicians was very inspiring and also made me think about how outreach activities could serve as an important means by which musicians could potentially channel and leverage these skills.”

* More on Dr. Dobrow’s study of outreach activities and its effect on a “calling”:

Moving forward, Dr. Dobrow’s research will continue to examine what factors shape the sense of “calling” over time. In general, a sense of “calling” has been viewed as a positive psychological orientation toward one’s career, but as yet, we do not know what factors enable the persistence of a “calling” over time. In fact, preliminary analyses of her data as well as field interviews with musicians suggest that “calling” declines over time—even in professions, such as music, in which people literally “play” for a living. These interviews suggest that one activity that may counteract the decline of having a “calling” over time is involvement in prosocial—or helping—behaviors (e.g., engaging in outreach or community service activities, such as performing in nursing homes or schools, teaching music in underserved communities, etc.). Yet, in the context of the music profession, a paradox emerges: this type of activity has typically been undervalued by the music schools that train aspiring professional musicians and the organizations that employ professional musicians. Dr. Dobrow’s most recent data collection (the fifth in her longitudinal study of musicians) will allow her to investigate the relationship between prosocial motivation and prosocial behaviors, outreach training, and musicians’ sense of “calling” toward music, and thus take an initial step toward investigating the factors that sustain a “calling” over time.